

West is of course true; but the East had a quite different tradition in the matter. And neither East nor West alone constitutes The Church.

DONALD ATTWATER

THE DOCTRINE OF THE VOID. By Rev. Leonard A. McCann, C.S.B. (The Basilian Press, Toronto. Duckett, London; 21s.)

The most satisfying part of this book is the first, an excellent summary of St John of the Cross's teaching of the voiding of the faculties by the active and passive nights of the soul. For this is the main theme of the book despite its misleading title, which suggests an esoteric Eastern doctrine rather than Christian mystical theology. Nevertheless, while reading the latter parts of the work, I could not rid myself of the impression that Father McCann, rather like Don Quixote, is fighting windmills. Who are those theologians whom he implicitly corrects, who would assert that St Thomas and St John of the Cross are teaching opposite doctrines? He is trying to prove by a wealth of citations that, despite certain superficial differences, both agree in fundamentals. But are there any serious Thomists who deny this? He stresses again and again that the differences are due to the fact that St Thomas treats his subject as a speculative theologian and St John of the Cross as a 'practitioner' of the spiritual life—surely something quite obvious to anyone even superficially acquainted with both. Nevertheless, the book contains much useful ammunition for those who have to defend true mysticism against the assaults of some of our contemporaries who, as Father L. J. Bondy, C.S.B., writes in his Foreword, 'place a dangerous faith in irrational forces'.

The book is unfortunately marred by its style. Whenever it is possible to choose between a good English word of two syllables and a Latin equivalent of four to six, the author invariably plunges for the latter. Thus: 'The laws and conditions of their development in the direction of Christian perfection, as manifested in the revealed word of God, wherein we find concrete exemplification of supernatural perfection', or 'Our connaturality with God is rendered operative by the virtue of charity' and, of course, 'contact' instead of touch even when translating the French verb *toucher*!

While our theologians are writing like this, can we really blame non-Catholics if they regard our religion as a foreign importation?

H. C. GRAEF

WILLIAM WESTON: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ELIZABETHAN. Translated from the Latin by Philip Caraman, S.J. With a Foreword by Evelyn Waugh. (Longmans; 18s.)

Father Caraman's *Weston* has all the enthralling excitement of his

edition of Fr Gerard's autobiography, which appeared in 1952. Though the characters, and the place in history, of the two missionaries are different, the setting and the mission and even the very details of the two stories, translated here with a freshness far more unclouded than that of Fr John Morris's original English versions, chime together the whole way through.

When Fr Weston landed secretly in Suffolk in 1584, there was not a Jesuit at large in the land; and the 'springboard' from the Low Countries, formed of the Jesuit 'invasion' of 1580 and of the Douai College of Fr Allen, was not yet secure. He himself was at large only two years, in which he secured the conversion of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, received and reconciled many other Catholics who had fallen away during the first twenty-five years of Penal Laws, and electrified not a few (including his modern admirers) by the spectacularity of his exorcisms. His arrest came in the context of the Babington Plot, albeit he had given that headstrong zealot no encouragement. Then in 1588, the climax of the Armada year, he was among the first batch of Catholic gentry and clergy confined in the famous Wisbech Castle prison. Here he remained, and in the Tower, till banished on the accession of James I, when he went to Rome and then Valladolid.

The story is an ideal complement to that of Fr Gerard. In Fr Weston we have a man of unimpeachable sanctity and missionary placidity. He is far from things political. What he hears he records carefully and accurately and gives his sources. His narrative will be invaluable for its sidelights on the day-to-day conditions of Catholic living during that first penal generation; above all, for its inside picture—so straightforward and simple—of the ways in which Wisbech Castle became a veritable centre of the Catholic apostolate, with classes run by the priests for the children of the laity imprisoned there. But those who want the inside scandals of the 'Wisbech stirs' will not find them here.

It is a book of extremes. At one extreme, the tension of escape and of capture, graphically described. At the other, and far more characteristic of the man, a passage like this: 'Here I stayed a few days. Several Catholic priests visited us. And it was here that I made a start with the work that was our appointed task; and before long my presence became known to many people.' Those words might have come from the Acts of the Apostles. They, and the passages like them, indeed link him back to Gospel times. His place in his own age, though, is perhaps best set-off by the contemporary phrase quoted by Evelyn Waugh in the Introduction: 'If I spoke with the tongue of Fr Campion, and wrote with the pen of Fr Persons, and led the austere life of Fr Weston, and yet had not charity, it would avail me nothing'.

A. C. F. BEALES